

With regards to the relaxation of the requirement that ILECs allow other DSL providers to use their lines and equipment, I have no problem with the ILECs being the sole provider of DSL connections. However, my biggest concern, and one which I feel desperately needs to be addressed here, is that an adequate distinction between the broadband connection service and the internet service provider is not being made. I have no problem with the ILECs being the only game in town for DSL service AS LONG AS I CAN CHOOSE MY ISP. There are different levels of internet service -- currently I use an independent DSL provider, Covad, to connect me to the ISP of my choice, who lets me run the services I wish to run via my connection. My great fear is that if I have no choice but to use SBC/Ameritech (the ILEC here in Chicago), I will be forced to use their internet service as well, and thus be severely restricted in how I use my internet connection. The internet should be open to all, and if we place our internet connections solely in the hands of parties who have an interest in controlling how we use the internet -- e.g., no static IPs, no servers, no NATs; because they want to upsell those services or restrict them to "business accounts" -- we will be dealing a severe blow to consumer choice and free market economics.

So let me state as emphatically as I can -- there are two separate businesses we are talking about here: the DSL connection business (i.e., routing data from the customer's computer(s) to the ISP), and the ISP itself, which routes that data onto the internet. Allowing the ILECs to shut out other DSL providers is understandable, but allowing them to force customers to use their ISPs is completely unacceptable and will have far-reaching, extremely negative consequences. ILECS must allow their customers to use the ISP of their choice.